



Antelope Valley Press, Wednesday, February 8, 2006 B4 Editorial

County winning fight against crooks, cheats

Encore!

We like what we're seeing from Los Angeles County and we want to see more, more, more. In addition to much publicized crackdowns on Section 8 housing cheats, the county also is continuing its due diligence in going after welfare fraud.

Nabbing welfare cheats has a special place in the heart of District Attorney Steve Cooley. A former head deputy in the Lancaster office, Cooley propelled himself to prominence, even landing on ABC's "20/20" news program, because of his work on welfare fraud.

Not long after that he was elected district attorney.

So it makes sense that Cooley would make busting cheaters a priority. Fraud not only costs the taxpayers billions, it cheats those who truly need the social service benefits.

In the latest case, three residents of Lancaster and two from Palmdale were among 16 people suspected by authorities of engaging in welfare fraud.

The suspects have been charged in connection with six separate criminal cases alleging that taxpayer-funded public-assistance programs were defrauded of more than \$1.2 million.

Lancaster resident Kathy Goldenreed, 28, was arrested in connection with the alleged defrauding of several public assistance programs for a total of \$345,719.

Goldenreed is believed to have conspired with the other defendants to present employment and child-care records, authorities said.

Goldenreed and the other suspects are innocent until proved guilty, but in general, child care is a lucrative arena for cheats. It seems for every welfare program the government invents, the criminals invent a dozen ways to defraud it. For example, since government subsidies became available for child care providers a few years ago, it is not uncommon to have criminals run phantom day-care centers.

A day-care “provider” will seek out parents to sign up their kids, even though they will never be taken to day care. The provider then collects government money for running the day care, kicking back a few bucks to the parents for going along with the scam.

Whenever authorities dig in and really investigate fraud of one type – welfare, Section 8, workers’ compensation, etc. – they often find other crimes. Crooks and cons like these are often engaged in a number of nefarious scams to bilk the taxpayer.

The disturbing trend – growing in prevalence the longer the massive welfare state exists and thrives – is toward a sense of entitlement. In many cases, the people who perpetrate these frauds feel they are entitled to this government cash. They view themselves almost like law-abiding veterans collecting the health care benefits they’re entitled to, or law-abiding college students taking out the government subsidized loans they’re entitled to.

They view their scams the way you view your method of collection your daily bread – they view it as a job.

The county is to be praised for providing a reality check for those who feel they are entitled to rip off the taxpayers.

Now let’s see some more.

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